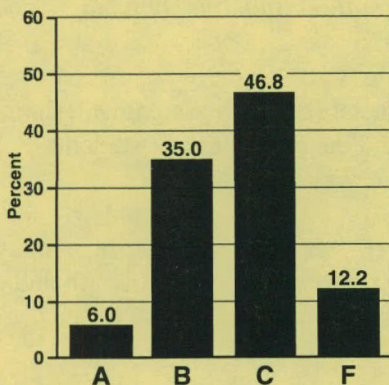


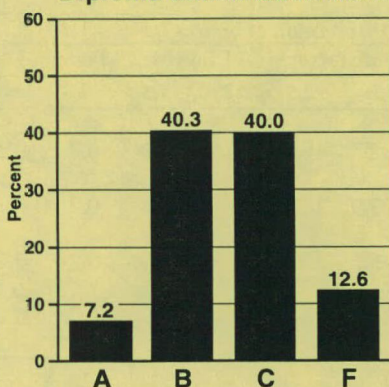
# English 33

## Diploma Examination Results Examiners' Report for January 1998

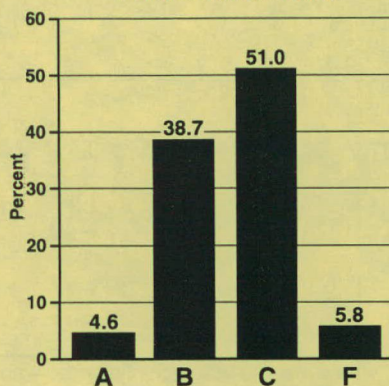
**School-Awarded Mark**



**Diploma Examination Mark**



**Final Course Mark**



The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators and students with an overview of results from the January 1998 administration of the English 33 Diploma Examination. This information is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports that have been provided to schools and school jurisdiction offices. A provincial report containing a detailed analysis of the combined November, January, June, and August results is made available annually.

### *Description of the Examination*

The English 33 Diploma Examination consists of two parts: a written-response section and a reading section. Each section is worth 50% of the total examination mark.

### *Achievement of Standards*

The information reported is based on the final course marks achieved by 5 607 students who wrote the January 1998 examination.

- 94.2% of these students achieved the acceptable standard (a final course mark of 50% or higher).
- 4.6% of these students achieved the standard of excellence (a final course mark of 80% or higher).

Generally, student achievement in relation to the acceptable standard in English 33 was satisfactory. The proportion of students achieving the acceptable standard was higher than it was in January 1997 and June 1997. The proportion of students achieving the standard of excellence was also higher than the proportion in January 1997 and June 1997. As in the past, however, few students in English 33 achieved the standard of excellence.

### *Provincial Averages*

- The average school-awarded mark was 61.3%.
- The average diploma examination mark was 63.3%.
- The average final course mark, representing an equal weighting of the school-awarded mark and the diploma examination mark, was 62.8%.

**ATA LIBRARY**  
11010 - 142 Street NW  
Edmonton, AB  
T5N 2R1



## **Part A: Written Response**

In responding to Part A, students are required to complete three writing assignments, each of which assesses a variety of writing and thinking skills.

Readers will find the results most meaningful in the context of the assignments and the scoring descriptors. The most useful starting place for reviewing the results is at the **3 Satisfactory** level. Such work exceeds the pass mark of 50%. The scoring criteria are provided in the 1997–98 *English 33 Information Bulletin, Diploma Examinations Program*.

The table below outlines the requirements for each assignment, the categories for scoring each assignment, the amount each category contributes to the total mark (Parts A and B combined), and the percentage of students achieving at the various levels. In January 1998, the average raw score for Part A was 30.3 out of 50.

By comparing school and jurisdiction results with provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

### ***Examination Blueprint and Percentage Distribution of Scores***

Description of the Writing Assignment	Scoring Category	Proportion of Total Mark(%)	Percentage Distribution of Scores									
			Excellent		Proficient		Satisfactory		Limited		Poor	
			5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	Ins*
<b>Personal Response to Literature</b> The student is required to read a piece of literature and to write a response from a personal perspective.	Thought and Detail	10.0	1.4	1.9	13.1	15.4	38.5	16.6	11.6	1.0	0.3	0.2
	Organization	5.0	1.4	2.0	12.5	16.5	39.9	16.8	9.7	0.8	0.2	0.2
	Matters of Choice	5.0	1.7	2.4	13.3	16.9	45.2	12.3	6.5	1.1	0.2	0.2
	Matters of Correctness	5.0	1.7	2.2	12.8	16.4	36.4	15.5	12.0	2.0	0.7	0.2
<b>Functional Writing</b> The student is required to write a response to a particular situation (e.g., a business letter or speech).	Thought and Detail	10.0	1.4	1.9	11.9	14.3	39.4	16.1	12.6	1.0	0.7	0.6
	Writing Skills	5.0	1.5	1.8	11.4	14.2	38.8	16.6	12.5	1.8	0.9	0.6
<b>Response to Visual Communication</b> The assignment asks the student to respond to a photograph. The student is required to write about main ideas in relation to techniques of visual communication.	Thought and Detail	5.0	0.8	1.2	9.0	12.7	37.9	20.1	14.7	1.5	0.4	1.7
	Writing Skills	5.0	0.8	0.9	9.2	11.2	44.4	16.2	12.4	2.2	1.0	1.7

**\*Ins** (Insufficient) is a special category that includes students who did not attempt the assignment, who wrote too little to evaluate, or who wrote answers that were completely off-topic.

**Note:** The shaded portion represents the percentage of students who achieved or exceeded the acceptable standard on each scoring category.



## Examiners' Comments

### Selection I: Personal Response to Literature

The excerpt from *Animal Dreams* was accessible to most students and evoked many thoughtful responses. Many students agreed with Loyd's idea that the kinds of experience that we have in real life determine our dreams and our hopes for the future. Other students, in addition to considering Loyd's idea, also discussed Codi's opposing view, stressing the importance of the imagination in enabling people to reach beyond their ordinary lives.

This excerpt challenged students to do some sophisticated thinking and in many cases, respond with exploratory writing, organizing ideas as the response progressed. Given that the excerpt itself was somewhat exploratory in nature, this approach by students was both understandable and acceptable.

Students developed ideas such as "Dreams provide a person with an escape from reality—it may even give the person a sense of hope," "Some people feel that dreams are meant to be acted upon and taken to the limit. These people are the optimists, those who want to make the world a better place in which to live." One student deplored the comfort of so-called stability, lamenting that "The dreamers are being driven out and being shunned by those who would keep everything the way it was." A more pragmatic view was expressed by a student who, acknowledging that dreams may indeed provide a person with an escape from reality, noted that "There is no denying the fact that if one wants to achieve one's goal, dreaming simply won't cut it. A person needs to take action."

Some students recounted experiences from their own lives in responding to the assignment. Although, as in the past, some students wrote about sports-related and academic experiences, perhaps more students than in the past tended to comment upon familial relationships and global dilemmas. A few students wrote about Martin Luther King's "dream," noting that his dream was the dream of a land without racism and prejudice. These students observed that King's dream was the result of his real-life experiences; he did not want the hatred and violence toward his people to continue.

A number of papers tended to be philosophical in nature, developed with observations rather than narrative illustrations or examples. The quality of these responses ranged from excellent to poor as did the quality of responses using narrative illustrations for support.

Many students supported their opinions with examples from literature such as or including *Death of a Salesman*, *Jurassic Park*, "The Red Dress," "Harrison Bergeron," *Hamlet*, *The Crucible*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *Ordinary People*. Some students also used films, such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, to support their opinions. Others used examples in the lives of historical figures such as Henry Ford and Isaac Newton.

Students achieving **3 Satisfactory** demonstrated a defensible understanding of the excerpt and responded to the assignment in a conventional way. Generally, students at this standard formed an opinion, commented on the reading selection, and then used personal observations and examples from literature to support their opinion. The organizational structure of responses at this level was functional. These students displayed general control of the basics of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

Students achieving **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** interpreted the excerpt in a well-considered and even insightful way, understanding and responding to the subtleties of the excerpt. Their effectively organized responses included introductions purposefully designed to provide direction for the reader. They were able to choose words and manipulate syntax for stylistic effect, and they demonstrated competent and even confident control of Matters of Correctness.

### Section II: Functional Writing

In January 1998, the Functional Writing assignment required students to assume the role of the Grade 12 representative on the Nalwen High School Students' Council. The students were to write the speech to be presented by the Students' Council President to the Nalwen School Board to persuade trustees to vote against a gender segregation policy that was going to be proposed by one of the trustees.

In their speeches, students were expected to consider their audience and to use a persuasive, but appropriately courteous, tone. They were to indicate their purpose for giving the speech, and to develop their purpose with essential information. For example, the students' council had surveyed fellow students, teachers, and parents about the issue and had provided other information that was to be considered and used as support.



Most students understood the assignment and used an appropriately courteous tone. When considering awareness of audience in marking Thought and Detail, markers were asked to differentiate between a tone that was passionate and one that was rude and offensive.

Many students, apparently recognizing the importance of synthesis, used the provided information appropriately. Many students agreed with Mr. Neal Terfdoome's opposition to the proposal. It was interesting to note that many students appeared to empathize with teachers such as Mr. Terfdoome, acknowledging their commitment to the education of students.

Unfortunately, because the Functional Writing instructions did not name the Students' Council President, many students used their own names in the openings of their speeches. An added complexity in this particular assignment was that the student was the speech writer, but the speech was to be delivered by the students' council president.

It was apparent that the gender segregation policy was an important issue for many students who argued persuasively that creating separate classes for male and female students was unnecessary and unwise.

Students achieving **3 Satisfactory** provided information sufficient to fulfill the purpose of their speeches. Using an appropriate tone, they identified their purpose and stated their request to the school board, using some of the information provided for support. Many students at this level also provided closure.

Students achieving **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** sustained a precise awareness of audience and an appropriate, often persuasive, tone throughout. Their speeches contained specific details that provided a perspective that would persuade the trustees to vote against the gender segregation proposal.

### Section III: Response to Visual Communication

In the black-and-white photograph included on the January 1998 English 33 Diploma Examination, two women, sitting at a table laughing and sharing a cup of coffee or tea, are in the foreground. This part of the photograph is out of focus and has a blurred effect. An elderly woman, sitting alone in the background in another room, is clearly in focus.

It is encouraging to note that most students formed generalizations about this photograph, which attests to its accessibility and also to the sensitivity of the students. In many cases, the students' generalizations were made near the conclusion of their compositions. In other cases, students developed an implicit interpretation of the photograph, often connecting this interpretation to experiences in their own lives. One of the Reliability Review papers contained a particularly effective response by a student who chose to adopt the persona of the old lady appearing in the background of the photograph. This response was developed to reveal the inner longings of the old lady. The student did this implicitly, by showing the readers, rather than merely telling them, of the old lady's loneliness and feelings of isolation.

Students developed generalizations such as "Old age is precious and deserves respect," "Two generations—worlds apart," and "The older you get, the more lonely you become." One student observed that "We are taught to respect the elders. The elders are the ones who hold the wisdom, knowledge, and the power."

Many students delivered passionate messages such as "The fact is, senior citizens are our future because they have information about the past," "They are not old, they are experienced," "I challenge anyone to go to visit and laugh it up with an elderly person. You will be amazed at what you can learn about life," and "Old age is a delicate time in one's life. It should be treated with the love and respect that it deserves."

Generally speaking, the compositions were lengthier than in the past.

Students achieving **3 Satisfactory** interpreted the photograph in a conventional way, providing generalized support. Many students at this level commented upon the photograph's plane of focus. Some also discussed texture and contrast.

Students achieving **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** provided well-considered interpretations of the photograph. These students explained how the details in the photograph and the photographer's choices (focus, texture, camera angle, line, and juxtaposition) reinforced their interpretations.



## Question-by-Question Results

Question	Key	Difficulty*
1	B	54.4
2	D	81.3
3	D	77.4
4	A	63.0
5	C	97.4
6	D	66.2
7	C	48.0
8	B	79.1
9	A	87.9
10	A	82.8
11	D	63.5
12	B	65.7
13	A	70.4
14	B	75.2
15	B	57.4
16	D	84.4
17	D	61.1
18	C	67.6
19	B	65.3
20	A	80.1
21	A	60.3
22	A	61.7
23	B	90.9
24	A	85.0
25	D	80.5
26	D	60.5
27	A	82.1
28	A	31.5
29	B	81.9
30	C	65.3
31	C	91.9
32	D	82.8
33	D	71.4
34	A	80.1
35	D	61.5
36	B	37.0
37	B	48.9
38	D	53.8
39	D	58.1
40	C	66.7
41	C	63.2
42	C	75.7
43	B	53.9
44	A	62.6
45	D	84.8
46	D	67.1
47	C	57.1
48	A	42.6
49	D	58.1
50	D	72.9
51	A	65.7
52	C	60.4
53	C	66.1
54	A	67.0
55	C	48.9
56	B	80.7
57	C	38.2
58	C	68.0
59	B	56.5
60	A	42.1
61	C	57.8
62	B	62.3
63	C	71.8
64	B	42.2
65	B	65.4
66	B	63.4
67	A	61.7
68	A	63.1
69	C	49.5
70	D	71.9

\*Difficulty—percentage of students answering the question correctly

## Part B: Reading

The table at the left shows question-by-question results and the keyed answers. Parallel tables in the school and jurisdiction reports show the percentage of students who selected each correct alternative. By comparing school and jurisdiction results to provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

### Examination Blueprint

*Part B: Reading* has a value of 70 marks, one for each multiple-choice question. Each question is classified in two ways: by the curricular content being tested and by the thinking (process) skill demanded by the question. The examination blueprint illustrates the distribution of questions in January 1998 according to these classifications.

Classification by Course Content	Classification by Thinking Skills			Total
	Literal Understanding	Inference and Application	Evaluation	
Meanings (Main Ideas/ Details)	5, 10	15, 16, 20, 28, 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, 40, 42, 43, 58, 61, 63, 64, 66, 69	12, 19, 27, 36, 45, 55, 57, 59, 62, 67, 70	31 Items (22%)
Relationships of Form and Content		2, 4, 6, 9, 13, 31, 44, 53, 60, 68	7, 24, 26, 37, 39	15 Items (11%)
Human Experience and Values		1, 3, 11, 14, 17, 18, 21, 22, 32, 38, 41, 54, 65	8, 23, 25, 56	17 Items (12%)
Knowledge of Revision and Editing	46, 47, 51	48, 49, 50, 52		7 Items (5%)
<b>Total</b>	5 Items (4%)	45 Items (32%)	20 Items (14%)	70 Items (50%)

### Subtest Results\*

Results are in average raw scores.

Total Part B: 46.2 out of 70

#### Course Content

- Main Ideas/Details: 20.2 out of 31
- Relationships of Form and Content: 9.9 out of 15
- Human Experience and Values: 11.8 out of 17
- Knowledge of Revision and Editing: 4.2 out of 7

\*Readers are cautioned **not** to compare subtest results because the subtests are not of equal difficulty. Instead, readers should compare these provincial subtest results with their own school subtest results.



## Examiners' Comments

The following table gives results for six multiple-choice questions. These six questions were chosen to represent the range of difficulty present in Part B (31.5 to 97.4). They also represent the question types for all of the course content categories that appear in the blueprint on page 5. For each question, statistics are given for five student groups. The comments following the table address some of the decisions that students may have made and some of the skills they may have used to answer these questions correctly.

**Percentage of Students Correctly Answering Selected Multiple-Choice Questions**

Student Group	Question Number					
	5	6	7	14	28	47
All Students	97.4	66.2	48.0	75.2	31.5	57.1
Students achieving the <i>standard of excellence</i> (80% or higher, or A) on the whole examination	100.0	93.3	71.9	96.3	50.9	76.3
Students achieving the <i>acceptable standard</i> who received between 65% and 79%, or B, on the whole examination	98.9	77.5	55.6	90.4	39.3	62.6
Students achieving the <i>acceptable standard</i> who received between 50% and 64%, or C, on the whole examination	97.5	58.4	40.8	67.6	24.4	52.0
Students <i>not</i> achieving the <i>acceptable standard</i> who received between 0% and 49%, or F, on the whole examination	90.5	39.4	32.9	38.9	18.0	44.8

Questions 5, 6, and 7 were three of a set of nine questions on the short story "The Party" by Jan Truss.

5. The child eats only the bread bun (line 70) because she
- A. has drunk too much tea
  - B. is not particularly hungry
  - C. wants to share with her family
  - D. knows that her father is watching

**Question 5** was classified under the reporting category *Meanings (Main Ideas/Details)*. (See page 5.) It was the easiest question on Part B and was answered correctly by the vast majority of the students who wrote in January 1998. All of the students who achieved the standard of excellence answered correctly, and even 90.5% of the students who failed the examination answered correctly.

Nearly all of the students appear to have taken the time to check the context of the line reference given in the question. In lines 70 and 71 of the short story, the narrator states, "I ate only the bread bun because there were five—counting me—in our family." Checking line references in context would seem to be an obvious strategy for a test taker to use. It is interesting to note, however, that in the past, particularly when a question such as this has appeared near the end of an examination, many students appear *not* to have reread for context. Such students have often lost marks in their haste to finish the examination.



---

6. The repetition of the "l" sound in "The long walk home with my Dad was lovely, moonlit, starlit, lamplit and storelit" (lines 77 to 78) helps to create a mood of

---

- A. suspense
  - B. formality
  - C. bleakness
  - D. contentment
- 

**Question 6** was classified under the reporting category *Relationships of Form and Content*, and was of average difficulty. As can be seen in the table on page 6, this question discriminated very highly between students achieving high scores on the examination and students achieving lower scores.

Most students were able to determine that the repetition of the "l" sound in "The long walk home with my Dad was lovely, moonlit, starlit, lamplit and storelit" contributes to the mood of contentment that the writer is creating. The "l" sound is the sound of the lullaby, a soothing sound, a sound used by poets and songwriters to slow the tempo and ease the mood. The high achieving students were able to detect this.

It is interesting to note that 39.7% of the students receiving "F" on the examination chose "B. formality" as their answer to question 6. Perhaps these students tended to believe that repetition, in and of itself, necessarily suggests formality since it is a "form," or technique, of emphasis. Such students may have trouble differentiating technique and effect.

---

7. The pathos underlying the child's participation in the Christmas party is suggested **most strongly** in

---

- A. "I left my coat for my Dad to hold" (line 44)
  - B. "We had to wait until everybody had a seat" (line 50)
  - C. "We were supposed to eat the five things while our Dads watched" (line 66)
  - D. "Every age got a different colour" (line 74)
- 

**Question 7** was classified under the reporting category *Relationships of Form and Content* and was a relatively difficult question with only 48.0% of all students choosing the keyed response. It was a "best answer" question in that each of the alternatives was, to some degree, correct. To choose the best answer, students had to weigh each alternative carefully and to choose the alternative that most strongly indicated the pathos underlying the child's participation in the Christmas party.

In spite of this question's difficulty, 71.9% of the students receiving "A" on the examination answered correctly. Only 16.3% of this group chose the next most popular alternative, "B. We had to wait until everybody had a seat." This alternative was selected by 24.3% of all students, by 21.6% of the students receiving "B" on the examination, by 27.4% of the students receiving "C," and by 27.9% of the students who failed.

It may be that the term "pathos," denoting a combination of pity and sadness, was unfamiliar to many of the students writing the examination. Pathos is, however, one of the fundamental effects created by literature and should be in the lexicon of any student finishing 12 years of schooling.

The majority of the students who achieved the standard of excellence appeared to know the meaning of the term "pathos" and appeared able to empathize with the situation suggested by the narrator's statement, "We were supposed to eat the five things while our Dads watched." The separation of the father and child, the fact that the father is watching rather than participating, and the fact that the child is eating the kind of luxuries that the father, because of his unemployment is unable to provide, contribute to the pathos of this scene.

Question 14 was one of a set of seven questions on the poem "Learning by Doing" by Howard Nemerov.

---

14. The speaker refers to "experts" (line 31) in a tone that is

---

- A. envious
  - B. scornful
  - C. sorrowful
  - D. respectful
- 

**Question 14** was classified under the reporting category *Human Experience and Values*. It was a relatively easy question, but it discriminated well between students who achieved higher scores on the examination and those who achieved lower scores.

Questions on tone are often difficult for English 33 students. That so many students were able to detect the speaker's scornful attitude toward the "experts" who had taken the tree down believing it to be "Rotten . . . at the fork" is noteworthy.



Question 28 was one of a set of nine questions on *A Doctor in the West* by Morris Gibson.

28. The statement "he adopted an air of complacent benevolence as he spoke" (lines 12 to 13) suggests that the narrator's colleague took on a manner of

- A. smug kindness
- B. gracious interest
- C. naive detachment
- D. exaggerated indifference

**Question 28** was classified under the reporting category *Meanings (Main Ideas/Details)*. It was the most difficult question on Part B—only 31.5% of all students answered correctly. It was even a relatively difficult question for the students who achieved the standard of excellence on the exam since only 50.9% of these students answered question 28 correctly. The most popular answer to this question was "B. gracious interest."

The statement "he adopted an air of complacent benevolence as he spoke" appears in a short paragraph near the beginning of the excerpt from *A Doctor in the West*. Also present in this paragraph are the statements, "My inquisitor warmed his well-tailored bottom before the fireplace" and "He was rocking backward and forward a little on his heels. It was a well-practised little mannerism of his, and was calculated, I thought, to impress." From these statements, and from other evidence in the excerpt such as the colleague's tendency to make assumptions, it is fairly clear that the narrator's colleague is *not* particularly gracious. Throughout the excerpt, he is smugly certain of his own assertions.

Question 47 was one of a set of seven questions that were designed to test students' knowledge of revision and editing. These questions were classified under the reporting category *Knowledge of Revision and Editing*. In answering questions such as this, students are required to make decisions about appropriate revisions to a piece of writing.

47. In paragraph 2, an error in usage that Robin has yet to correct is evident in the phrase

- A. "suggest to you" (line 1)
- B. "lazy and careless" (line 2)
- C. "would of laughed" (line 3)
- D. "changed my mind" (line 4)

**Question 47** was more difficult than the average question on the examination, but it discriminated reasonably well between students achieving high scores and those achieving low scores.

The usage error that this question examines is one that a great many English 33 students commit in their writing in Part A of the examination. This error is one that students tend to transpose from their spoken language to their written language. The contracted form of "would have" is enunciated by many students as "would of," and what they speak and hear is what they write. The fact that, even in print, "would of" appears to these students to be correct usage is quite revealing.

### ***Comparison of Students' Results on Parts A and B***

While it is not intended that Parts A and B of the English 33 Diploma Examination be considered separate exams, it is interesting to compare the distribution of scores on the two parts of the examination.

	Part A	Part B
A	5.3%	21.5%
B	26.0%	34.0%
C	55.5%	29.2%
F	13.2%	15.3%

In January 1998, considerably more students were awarded scores in the "A" category on Part B of the examination than on Part A. The scarcity of scores of 80% and above on Part A does not signal a new phenomenon; in the past, few students have scored at this level on Part A.

For further information, contact Tom Dunn (tdunn@edc.gov.ab.ca), Victoria Forchuk (vforchuk@edc.gov.ab.ca), or Elana Scraba (escraba@edc.gov.ab.ca) at the Student Evaluation Branch at 427-0010. To call toll-free from outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

Copyright 1998, the Crown in Right of Alberta, as represented by the Minister of Education, Alberta Education, Student Evaluation Branch, 11160 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 0L2. All rights reserved.

Alberta educators may reproduce this document for non-profit educational purposes.